UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

FIRST COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
Monday, 8 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von WAGNER (Germany)

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A/C.1/48/SR.21
21 December 1993
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93-82190 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

EXPRESSION OF SYMPATHY IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEATH OF AMBASSADOR VARNA

1. The CHAIRMAN, on behalf of all the members of the Committee, expressed sympathy to the delegation of Norway in connection with the death of His Excellency Ambassador Varna, Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations Office at Geneva.

CONSIDERATION OF ALL DRAFT RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS (continued) (A/C.1/48/L.9, L.10, L.17, L.19, L.27 and L.40)

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.40

2. Mr. O'SULLIVAN (Australia) introduced draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.40 (Comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty), relating to agenda item 66, on behalf of its lead sponsors, Australia, Mexico and New Zealand.

3. Since the General Assembly had last considered the question, nuclear testing had been carried out only once, the Governments of the United States of America, France and the Russian Federation had continued the moratorium, and the nuclear-weapon States had made clear their willingness to negotiate a comprehensive ban on testing. The Conference on Disarmament had given its Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban a mandate to initiate negotiations for such a ban.

4. Under those circumstances, the lead sponsors had endeavoured to draft a resolution which could be supported by the entire international community; in the search for consensus, all parties concerned had been obliged to accept a compromise solution, which augured well for the start of the negotiations. He expressed appreciation to the sponsors, who numbered over 100, for their cooperation, which reflected the international community's desire to establish a legally binding instrument on the subject. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

5. Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) said that the draft resolution under consideration differed from the General Assembly's previous resolutions in that it was consistent with the unanimous decision of the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty and would most likely be adopted without a vote, as the culmination of a process promoted by many delegations over a number of years, and as a result of changes in the position of some nuclear-weapon States. In order to consolidate those changes and to have them reflected in a political and legal agreement, the lead sponsors had agreed to amend the text adopted in previous years.

6. Mr. KEATING (New Zealand) said that the text of the draft resolution reflected the new climate stemming from the recognition, embodied in the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to initiate negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty, that it was possible to contemplate the conclusion of a treaty which would enhance the security of all States without compromising the security interests of the nuclear-weapon States. The support

(Mr. Keating, New Zealand)

of the Committee and the General Assembly for a comprehensive test-ban treaty had been of significant help in bringing about that favourable climate. In 1991 for the first time in nearly 20 years, a single draft resolution which had received overwhelming support from the General Assembly had been submitted to the First Committee.

7. In January 1993, the Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand had asked the Conference on Disarmament whether it was reasonable to expect that the resolution could be transformed into a treaty within a period of three years. The large number of sponsors of the current draft was a sign that the international community would fully support the Conference on Disarmament when negotiations began for an internationally and effectively verifiable comprehensive test-ban treaty, and that the progress of those negotiations would be watched carefully. New Zealand hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote as a demonstration of the existence of the political will required to complete that work successfully.

8. Mr. TANAKA (Japan) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution; as Japan held the chairmanship of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, it had been involved in drafting the resolution from an early stage. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote and that the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty would commence smoothly and be given the priority which they required.

9. Mr. BERNHARDSEN (Norway) said that his country's commitment to nuclear disarmament and the conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty was stronger than ever before. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus and would serve as a basis for rapid progress in the negotiations to be initiated by the Conference on Disarmament in 1994. In that connection, full advantage should be taken of the inter-sessional consultations conducted by Ambassador Tanaka of Japan, and the Conference on Disarmament should be given sufficient resources to carry out the negotiations effectively.

10. The nuclear-weapon States should refrain from further testing so as to create a propitious climate for the 1995 Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Norway believed that a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty would be a crucial instrument, both for promoting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and for reducing the danger of nuclear contamination of the environment.

Draft resolutions A/C.1/48/L.17 and A/C.1/48/L.19

11. Mr. FOUATHIA (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced draft resolutions A/C.1/48/L.17 (Prohibition of the dumping of radioactive wastes) and A/C.1/48/L.19 (Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa). The first draft related to agenda item 71 (d) and was based on previous General Assembly resolutions. The second draft related to agenda item 82 and was in keeping with the intention which the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity had solemnly declared in 1964 in the Cairo Declaration on the Denuclearization of Africa. It was to be hoped

(Mr. Fouathia, Algeria)

that, as in previous years, the two draft resolutions would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.9

12. Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.9 (Amendment of the Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests in the Atmosphere, in Outer Space and under Water), relating to agenda item 65, on behalf of the sponsors, to which Bolivia and Gabon had been added. It should be noted that the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the partial test-ban Treaty had been observed on 5 August 1993; since the signing of that Treaty, intensive work had been carried out with a view to the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

13. That work had been embodied in a process known as the amendment conference, which had held its first substantive session in January 1991, and had reached full agreement in New York on 10 August 1993. At the same time, the Conference on Disarmament had decided to initiate negotiations for a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. Accordingly, it was clear that all States, both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, were unanimous in their desire to conclude a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would receive the broadest possible support from the members of the Committee.

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.27

14. Mrs. LONDOÑO JARAMILLO (Colombia) introduced draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.27 (International arms transfers), relating to agenda item 71 (h), on behalf of the sponsors, to which Spain had been added. The draft focused on illicit traffic in conventional weapons, which represented a serious problem for many States which were experiencing destabilizing situations. Terrorism, mercenaries and common crime had serious political, economic and social consequences, which affected the individual and collective well-being of whole societies.

15. There could be no doubt that a serious, systematic and universal study and discussion would increase the possibility of finding common solutions, adapted to national realities, which would promote international cooperation aimed at ending that plague. The draft resolution was in keeping with that aim; it appealed to the international community to become involved in the search for lasting solutions, and thus to shoulder its responsibilities in that area.

16. Lastly, she said that paragraph 4 of the Spanish version of the draft resolution should be amended to read, "considere la inclusión de" in lieu of "examine la posibilidad de incluir".

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.10

17. Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) introduced draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.10 (General and complete disarmament), relating to agenda item 71, concerning the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of vehicles for their delivery in all its aspects. The international community had already taken

(Mr. Marin Bosch, Mexico)

major steps in that direction, as shown by the adoption of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction which had been opened for signature in January 1993; discussions concerning the various aspects of the item had been held in the United Nations and other multilateral forums. Nevertheless, the international community had not yet been able to reach agreement on what steps to take to resolve that issue more broadly. The aim of the draft resolution was to place the First Committee in a better position to consider that topic.

18. Referring to the text of the draft, he said that the "representative intergovernmental group of experts" mentioned in paragraphs 1 and 2 consisted of States members and observers of the Conference on Disarmament and that the question could be considered between sessions of the conference on Disarmament; the draft resolution had no financial implications.

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

FIRST COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 9 November 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. von WAGNER (Germany)

later: Mr. PONCE (Ecuador)

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CONSIDERATION OF ALL DRAFT RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 156: RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK AND REFORM OF THE AGENDA OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE (continued)

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22 December 1993
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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF ALL DRAFT RESOLUTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER ALL DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AGENDA ITEMS (continued) (A/C.1/48/L.13/Rev.2, L.15, L.18, L.29 and L.34)

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.29

1. Mr. GUILLEN (Peru), on behalf of the sponsors, introduced the draft resolution in document A/C.1/48/L.29 relating to agenda item 72 (f) and said that it represented an attempt to initiate a new phase, in keeping with the changes which the international community was undergoing, by enhancing the functioning of the United Nations regional centres for peace, disarmament and development and injecting a greater dynamism into their work, in accordance with the views expressed by the Secretariat and the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. He welcomed the pledges of contributions made by various countries during the Eleventh United Nations Pledging Conference for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme.

2. Interest in revitalizing the regional centres had prompted the Group of African States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, as well as a large number of Asian and Pacific countries, to join forces with a view to submitting a draft resolution, introducing new elements which might contribute towards that goal. Referring to the text of the draft resolution, he stressed that paragraph 3 contained a new concept of the work of the regional centres, which would permit them to address various topics of importance, such as the relationship between regional disarmament, arms control and international security, their principles and guidelines, ways and means, and the role of the United Nations, which would revitalize the work of the regional centres. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

3. Mr. FOUATHIA (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, fully supported the statement made by the representative of Peru and, after underlining the importance of all the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament for the maintenance of peace and security and for disarmament in general, he emphasized that the Lomé Centre also represented a valuable instrument for the African countries for the solution of such complex issues as frontiers in Africa and the promotion of confidence-building measures among the States of that continent.

4. The Lomé Centre was, however, facing enormous financial difficulties which were a matter of serious concern to the Group of African States. If the Centre was to perform its tasks efficiently, the international community must pay special attention to it. In that connection, he expressed his appreciation to those countries which were contributing and said he hoped that the financial situation of the three regional centres would improve and that the measures envisaged by the Secretary-General with a view to strengthening the Centre for Disarmament Affairs would be extended to the three United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would receive the unanimous support of the Committee.

5. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that disarmament and arms control efforts at the regional and global levels complemented each other. The United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament therefore had an important function to perform. The Regional Centre in Asia and the Pacific had provided an important forum for the exchange of views on approaches that could be adopted in the various subregions. It would be only proper if the Centre's potential for creating a favourable atmosphere for preventive diplomacy and facilitating and broadening understanding among States of the region were fully utilized. His Government therefore continued to support the valuable activities of the Centre through its contribution to the trust fund for the Centre. It expressed its willingness to increase its support, within its limited resources, and at the same time thanked all Governments and institutions which had contributed to the financing of the Centre's activities.

6. He welcomed the statement made before the First Committee by Mr. Marrack Goulding, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, in which he had expressed the determination of the Secretariat to pay special attention to the work of the regional centres so that they could become an effective part of the United Nations response to the new opportunities and challenges, and to enhance their impact on the regions they served. He urged the international community to allocate the necessary resources to enable the Centre to carry out its functions effectively and expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

7. Mrs. MASON (Canada) said that disarmament at its core was concerned with creating the conditions under which countries would place less reliance on armaments and more reliance on alternative processes to ensure their viability and well-being against all manner of threats, and that, at the present juncture, it seemed clear that the tools for building such alternative mechanisms must be regionally and cooperatively based. In that new institution-building process, the United Nations had both a global/normative role and an operational role at the regional, subregional and local levels. Arms control and disarmament were tools in the process of building collective security, just as were preventive diplomacy, peace-building and peace-keeping. Countries must be encouraged to develop practical mechanisms to prevent disputes and to resolve them peacefully. Cooperation on both a local and a global level was necessary to control the use of force and promote collective security.

8. Her country attached increasing priority to regional approaches to disarmament and to the "regional" role of the United Nations in that regard. As examples, she referred to the process of dialogue on cooperation in the field of regional security, under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, as well as the convening of a series of annual meetings of officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence of South-East Asia to analyse ways of promoting transparency in military matters. Canada pledged its continuing support for the work of the United Nations regional centres and hoped that the current review would identify practical ways of enhancing the functioning of those centres.

9. With respect to the draft resolution, her country had been prepared to be a sponsor of an earlier version, which had taken due account of the review of the mandate of the centres and which had reflected the trend towards the better integration of the work of the three centres into the broader preventive

(Mrs. Mason, Canada)

diplomacy activities of the Organization as a whole. Unfortunately the draft resolution under consideration did not address the issue of the mandate in a sufficiently forward-looking manner. Her delegation was therefore not a sponsor of the draft resolution, although it strongly supported it.

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.15

10. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka), on behalf of the States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, introduced the draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace under agenda item 78. He recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/59, had requested the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to consider alternative approaches leading to the achievement of the goals contained in the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and to address the complex ramifications of the issues involved and differing perceptions on those issues as well as the future role of the Ad Hoc Committee. The draft resolution endeavoured to respond to those requests and reflected the new spirit of cooperation in the international arena which the draft resolution, in turn, should promote. The Non-Aligned Movement hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.34

11. Mr. ROTH (Sweden) introduced on behalf of the sponsors the draft resolution entitled "Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects" under agenda item 75. Since the Convention was opened for signature in April 1981, several resolutions on the subject had been adopted without a vote. However, the present draft resolution differed from its predecessors.

12. The Convention and its three Protocols were part of a tradition of international humanitarian law applicable to armed conflicts which restricted the use of certain conventional weapons. In 1980 most States had welcomed the adoption of the Convention, which was the first international treaty since 1925 to prohibit or restrict the use of certain weapons. At the same time, several Governments, including the Swedish Government, had regretted that the new regulations were so limited that the Convention failed to live up to the expectations of the international community. In fact, it contained only two outright prohibitions: on the use of certain fragmentation weapons and of certain booby-traps and explosives. Furthermore, neither those prohibitions nor the remaining restrictions of the Convention were supported by a verification regime.

13. In recent years it had become clear that the Convention was inadequate. The international community had focused its attention on anti-personnel land mines which continued to cause suffering among civilians not only in times of war both also after the cessation of hostilities. The problem was aggravated by the fact that modern mines did not contain any metal parts, which made mine clearance and deactivation even more difficult. One way to deal with such complex problems was to strengthen the Convention; Sweden was therefore grateful to the French Government for having proposed a review of the Convention. The draft resolution was unique because it paved the way for a historic conference

(Mr. Roth, Sweden)

on the use of certain conventional weapons which might be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects.

14. The Convention had entered into force in December 1983 after ratification by 20 States. Since then the number of States signatories had increased, although the total was only 37. Thus, the draft resolution urged States which had not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and its three Protocols. It was to be hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

15. Speaking on behalf of the Swedish delegation, he said that sea mines had not been regulated by an international agreement since 1907. Free-floating mines without neutralization mechanisms had been used in the Gulf War and had constituted a threat to peaceful navigation. Naval mines should be subject to restrictions within the framework of the Convention. A draft protocol on prohibitions or restrictions on the use of naval mines had been submitted by Sweden in 1991 in document A/C.1/46/15. The forthcoming conference should also discuss the humanitarian law implications of laser technology, for there was already a clear risk that lasers would be developed for use on the conventional battlefield, in particular in order permanently to blind the adversary's soldiers. Such weapons might have certain military advantages but, on balance and taking into account humanitarian considerations, they ought to be subject to prohibitions or restrictions.

16. Mr. WAGENMAKERS (Netherlands) said that, in accordance with the position taken by the Netherlands in the Committee over the years, his delegation supported the draft resolution introduced by Sweden. More than ever before, the Convention deserved the Committee's full attention, for the weapons which it covered had acquired a new relevance. The spread of regional conflicts had brought with it the indiscriminate use of land mines and booby-traps which had a direct effect not only on civilians but also on United Nations peace-keeping forces; furthermore, they significantly reduced the economic viability of an affected area.

17. It was remarkable that at its present session the General Assembly had before it three different but related initiatives on the subject. The Assembly had recently adopted resolution 48/7 entitled "Assistance in mine clearance", which tackled the issue from a practical angle. A related draft resolution before the Committee approached the problem from the point of view of the producing and exporting State and called for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines. And the draft resolution introduced by Sweden looked at the problem from the angle of international law. Support for the draft resolution and thus of the Convention would offer an opportunity of increasing security throughout the world.

18. Mr. Ponce (Ecuador), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

Draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.13/Rev.2

19. Mr. CHANDRA (India), introducing the draft resolution entitled "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons" under agenda item 72 (b), said that the past two or three years had witnessed many positive changes on the international politico-military and security scene. However, what had not changed was the idea that nuclear weapons were still necessary for security. Nor had there been any change in the doctrine of nuclear deterrence or in the reluctance to renounce the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, even though it was evident that a nuclear war could never be won and must never be fought. The overwhelming majority of mankind wanted a nuclear-weapon-free world and therefore complete nuclear disarmament.

20. India believed that those objectives were achievable; just as the international community had decided to begin negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty and was even on the verge of deciding to initiate negotiations on the banning of the production of fissile material for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, so one day it would negotiate an agreement banning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and their manufacture and calling for their total elimination.

21. The current draft resolution had been improved by taking into account the recent positive developments in disarmament as well as the views expressed by some delegations at the previous session. In that context, it must be stressed that the draft convention annexed to the resolution was only one possible basis for the negotiations. India urged all Member States to continue to ameliorate the international security climate by supporting the draft resolution.

22. Mr. TANAKA (Japan) said that his delegation endorsed the view expressed by the representative of the Netherlands concerning draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.18 on transparency in armaments that to ensure that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was effective it was essential to have the widest possible participation by Member States. Efforts must be pursued to increase the understanding and cooperation among States in each region, particularly in regions which still had few participating countries, and the activities of the United Nations regional disarmament centres must contribute to those efforts.

23. A conference was to be held at the beginning of 1994 under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Disarmament Centre in Katmandu; Japan hoped that transparency in armaments and the United Nations Register would be among the main items taken up by the conference. The draft resolution should be adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 156: RATIONALIZATION OF THE WORK AND REFORM OF THE AGENDA OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE (continued)

24. Mr. GUILLAUME (Belgium) said that, in accordance with the Chairman's wish that an attempt should be made to merge the informal texts of the Group of 12 and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries with a view to submission of a joint draft resolution on rationalization of the Committee's work, a small working party consisting of countries from both groups had been set up. As chairman of the working party, he wished to introduce a paper which was the result of its deliberations. The aim had been to produce a draft resolution which could be

(Mr. Guillaume, Belgium)

adopted by consensus, in accordance with the Chairman's wishes. The paper mentioned the concessions which the two groups had had to make for that purpose. It represented a difficult and fragile balance, and its sponsors would only be able to accept amendments compatible with their search for consensus. Of course, the text had the support of all the countries which had participated in its drafting.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.